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ABSTRACT

The status of women viewed against the background of the United Nations Decade for Women is examined with emphasis on the world context, the Latin American context, and the context of rural women in the region. It describes attempts at categorization of rural women in Latin America based on the main types of agricultural economy in the region and centered on the position occupied by women within the peasant strata and their main activities. It also discusses the many roles of peasant women and the situation of wage-earning women, how much they earn and how they allocate their incomes. The impact of modernization has been analyzed with special reference to the family. Differences in family types are described according to peasant strata and regions within the same country. It appears that official documents have covered the basic aspects of recommendations and policies, sometimes in detail. A six-page bibliography is appended. (SY)

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THE RURAL WOMAN IN LATIN AMERICA: A SOCIAL ACTOR IN THE PAST DECADE (1975-1984)

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INDEX

	Page
Summary	v
A. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT	1
1. The subject of women: its presence on the world scene	1
2. The Latin American scene: the processes of the last three decades	3
3. Predominant types of agricultural economies	4
B. RURAL WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA	10
1. Some generalities on the knowledge acquired	10
2. Attempts to tipify rural women	12
3. Women in peasant units	13
4. Proletarianization of rural women	18
5. Income: amount, administration and destination	23
C. THE RURAL FAMILY	24
1. Nuclear versus extended and incomplete families	25
2. Headship of households	27
3. The decline in fertility	28
D. WOMEN'S DEMANDS AND ORGANIZATIONS: SOME REFLECTIONS	31
E. RECOMMENDATIONS AND POLICIES	34
Notes	38
BIBLIOGRAPHY	43

/Summary

Summary

THE RURAL WOMAN IN LATIN AMERICA: A SOCIAL ACTOR IN THE PAST DECADE (1975-1984)

A review of official United Nations documents, of ECLAC studies and of the results of research done in the region has made it possible to assess how much progress has been made in knowledge about rural women over the past ten years, what subjects seem to have been sufficiently covered (and which not) and what new circumstances now affect women as a result of the changes that have occurred in the overall economic and social setting and in the agricultural sector in particular. In general, one may make the following remarks concerning the documents reviewed: a) there has been a qualitative change in the assignment of roles: whereas the rural woman was formerly (1975) described as a "preparer, storer, and marketer of food", the important part she plays in the production of food is now recognized; b) the impact of the modernization of agriculture has up to now been viewed in terms of global indicators (changes in the composition of the labour force, participation in agriculture, urbanization of the populatio and others) or in terms of processes that have been observed from a male viewpoint (loss of land, proletarianization and sale of labour, the rural exodus), without taking into account the fact that these processes also affect women; c) the research studies have a strong economistic bias, arising from the need to assign a value to the rural woman as a producer, i.e. "the economic woman"; d) so far there are still few (published) findings of research involving methodological innovations in which the rural woman is viewed as a whole person (action-oriented research, participative research, personal histories, workshops for training and reflection, and others).

The results obtained in this study have been divided into five chapters: 1) background information relating to the decade for woman in the world context, in the Latin American context and in the context of the rural woman in the regio 2) the rural woman in Latin America; 3) the rural family; 4) women's demands and organizations; and 5) some policy recommendations. Not all these subjects have been treated with the same degree of thoroughness and we have therefore tried only to stress the most significant aspects of the material reviewed.

An obvious but nonetheless important finding has been that there are many differences among rural women and consequently that many different types can be distinguished. A first attempt at classification, going from the general to the particular, is based on the main types of agricultural economy in the region, i.e., the traditional economy, the modern economy and the settlement economy. Of these the peasant economies have been treated in greater depth, both because of their importance in the production of food and because they include the secto of the rural poor. A second type of classification has centred on the position occupied by women within peasant strata and on what their main activities are, i.e., whether they work in crafts, as traders, as "indigenous vendors" or in other areas.

This paper describes attempts at typification of rural women in Latin America and then goes on to discuss the many roles of peasant women, i.e., housework, reproductive work and "own-account" activities. It also discusses the situation of wage-earning women, how much they earn and how they allocate their incomes.

/Some issues

Some issues have been studied in detail; these include the domestic role or that of daily and generational reproduction of the labour force; the sexual division of labour; the role of agricultural production and its variations according to social insertion; the "other" activities performed by women in order to obtain income; the participation of women in survival strategies of peasant groups; the importance of the stage in the life cycle as a factor determining the type and amount of activities women perform. For these studies, it has sometimes been necessary to use ad hoc methodologies (such as the "time budget" or "pattern of activities", to find out how much time women devote to housework, productive activities and "others"). In other cases, certain methodological shortcomings have become evident in dealing with some problems. In this regard, an effort has been made to describe specifically and give examples of deficiencies in measurement of the female EAP and of participation rates, and to indicate what modifications should be introduced to provide for accurate measurement. Some of the aspects dealt with in this paper have only recently been studied, e.g., the purposes for which women use their earnings, which are very specific and very important to the family unit; the social and cultural role women perform in communities and smallholding areas, and the proletarianization of women and their position as wage earners.

Despite its importance, the latter point has not yet received the attention it deserves. There are no measurements of the incorporation of female labour into the modern sector of agriculture, partly because of the fact that this involves seasonal work. Nor has much progress been made in finding out about the changes this brings about in the organization of housework and in consumption, family relations, roles and cultural patterns in general.

The impact of the modernization of agriculture has been analysed with special reference to the rural family, such as situations where households are headed by women because the head of the family has emigrated or deserted (or because no family has been formed, as in the case of the English-speaking Caribbean); aspects pertaining to the sale of labour; the breakdown to and changes in family structure (the increasing prevalence of one-person families and incomplete families, the non-constitution of families, the predominance of nuclear over extended families), the deferment of the age of marriage and the marked fall in fertility rates. Differences in family types are described according to peasant strata and regions within the same country; the nuclear family seems to occur where there is greater paucity of agricultural resources and hence less need for labour; the extended family, on the other hand, seems to be linked with a greater area of farmland and a greater demand for labour. Similarly, a change from labour-intensive crops to others requiring less manpower has an effect on hiring patterns and on family types. It is also suggested that the extended family should be regarded as a phase in the family cycle.

With respect to women's demands and organizations, the little information available approaches the subject from the standpoint of other problems. Nonetheless, some apparently contradictory impressions have emerged. One is that of the silent woman who does not express herself, who does not make public demands, who is ashamed of her lack of education and feels "stultified my maternity". Another is that of the woman who is capable of taking decisions within her own home, whose opinions are transmitted through her husband to the community, i.e., the "homebody" whose intermediary with the outside world is a man.

/As regards

As regards participation in organizations, there is a manifest prejudice whereby the woman is viewed as being "absent from productive activity." Indeed, at first sight, women do appear to be excluded from organizations, but this is actually the case with respect to organizations which regulate the use of the physical resources of production (irrigation boards, canal-owners associations, range management) and from productive organizations in general (small farmers cooperatives, agrarian reform cooperatives and others). On the other hand, women do participate actively in all those organizations or activities which are concerned with the general welfare, religious festivals and activities, community services, exchange of labour and bartering of goods. It is suggested herein that their participation has not been recognized owing to a problem of viewpoint, since attention has been focused almost exclusively on what seems more important in the eyes of an external agent, i.e., participation in productive, labour and political organizations.

Regarding recommendations and policies, it appears that official documents have covered the basic aspects, sometimes in detail. What seems to be needed is, firstly, to find out in each situation (areas of the economy, types of women) what it is that characterizes poor rural women in comparison with poor rural men or children. Secondly, it is important to harmonize objectives. In the case of peasant women, this refers to the production of more food, performance of the role of housewife, performance of "other activities", training, participation in meetings; in the case of female agricultural wage earners, it refers to holding a job in addition to doing housework, participation in trade unions or other organizations. Thirdly, as far as policies are concerned, it is important to review the distinction between the public and private spheres, Further discussion on this question would make it possible to meet the "human needs" of women more satisfactorily. Fourthly, if policies are to respond to the felt needs of women, mechanisms for "listening" to them must be created; no programme can succeed without the active support of its intended beneficiaries. Fifthly, it is necessary to develop simple, low-cost technological options, both in the productive and the domestic fields, with a view to opening up possibilities for lightening a woman's burden of work and allowing her some free time . Sixthly, there is a pressing need to evaluate the numerous action projects carried out by non-governmental agencies, in order to assimilate experiences, extend them, or, if necessary, reject them. Such an evaluation should consist of more than a mere appraisal of specific activities and should be carried out within the conceptual framework of comprehensive development. Finally, it is essential to learn the results of new social research methodologies, such as participative research and popular education, and to support them, should this be justified.

/A. BACKGROUND

A. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1. The subject of women: its presence on the world scene

The world concern for women in general, and more particularly for urban and rural women, is subsequent to the Second World War. The emergence of feminist movements in the developed countries, whose spokeswomen were urban residents of medium-and high-income strata, created an awareness in this. But it was certain situations that arose in the 1960s and 1970s that created a framework of world concern and brought women to the fore as a subject worthy of attention and concern.

The succession of certain prolonged natural catastrophies -the droughts that brought famine to Bangladesh and Sahel; the nutritional difficulties detected by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 1962 and confirmed in 1974; the controversies on the Green Revolution, which later was to be extended to the "modernization" of agriculture as a whole, including the failure, apparent or real, of most agrarian reform experiments; the stagnation of what had been for 23 years an ever-increasing cereal production; and, finally, the oil crisis that took on the appearance of a major upheaval- diminished the optimism that had persisted up to the decade of the 1970s.

The concern to which this sequence of events gave rise brought women and their situation into prominence as a matter of world concern, a distinction that was later to be extended to rural women. Beginning with the recognition that women constitute half the population and that presumably they had been an inadequately used resource, it was thought that their participation might help to solve some of the problems that plague societies; the issue is their "incorporation into development". Once before their conscious collaboration had been needed when society as a whole was faced with the problem of "population explosion", and they were made the main target of the birth-control programmes directed particularly to the urban and rural low-income groups, and above all to the latter, which had the highest fertility indexes.

In this context the World Conference of International Women's Year was held in Mexico City in 1975, and subsequently the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, was proclaimed. At the Mexico City Conference, the main considerations on women related to the discrimination and inequalities they had suffered in the past, their margination from active life, both economic and social, and "the loss implied in the underutilization of the potential of approximately 50% of the world adult population". Consequently, it was recommended that measures should be intensified to ensure the full integration of women into the global effort in favour of development, and that support should be given to projects designed "to utilize the maximum potential and to develop the self-reliance of rural women," 1/

Respecting rural women, it was recognized that in many countries they formed a large part of the agricultural work force, and played an important role in the preparation, processing and marketing of food, so that they constituted a substantial economic resource. It was also acknowledged that their status was doubly disadvantaged because of the rural worker's lack of technical equipment,

/education and training

education and training.2/ At the same time, there seemed to be the implication that industrial development had not been sufficiently dynamic to absorb this migrant labour force.

In the Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women into Latinamerican Economic and Social Development (1977) the considerations, recommendations and resolutions adopted a more general level at the Mexico City Conference were made more specific. As regards rural women, the new element was the concern to seek ways of improving their situation, so as to restrain their emigration to the cities with its resultant aggravation of urban problems. 3/ Thus, the problems caused by the rural exodus came to be of great concern.

Against this background, special attention was given to rural women. In 1977 a workshop was held in Mexico City, with the participation of ECLA, FAO, and UNICEF, on the impact of agricultural modernization on the participation of rural women. The workshop was based on the Regional Plan of Action (RPA) and on the resolutions of the United Nations Assembly (especially resolution 31/133) which give priority to the situation of impoverished rural women, and on the resolutions adopted at the Nineteenth Conference of FAO, which recommended that attention should be given to the question of how to achieve the full participation of women in the adoption of decisions and the planning and execution of the agrarian reform and rural development. The workshop was prepared and organized with two aims in view. The first was to see how the modernization of agriculture had affected the situation of poor rural women in the different contexts of family and local circumstances. The second was to identify lines of action for incorporating women into development, once the basic needs and problems of women in low-income rural families had been ascertained and assessed.

The idea is to distinguish between different production situations that affect women: a traditional peasant subsistence sector, a transitional sector which shows the effect of modernization policies, and the agrarian reform experiments. Similarly, families are to be classified according to whether or not the head of the family migrates owing to his being hired as a wage-earning worker.

The World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (Copenhagen, 1980) represented a great step forward in furthering the knowledge of rural problems, particularly those of women.

Among the questions addressed in the background document for the Conference the following seems particularly important: What is the status of women in rural society and what new factors and circumstances tend to accentuate their special disadvantages? The arguments may be summarized as follows: a) Two-thirds of the women in developing countries live in rural areas; b) Rural development has been neglected in terms of low capital investment and few employment opportunities, investment in agriculture has been aimed at export and not at food production; there is little access to health, education and information; there is an obvious adverse effect of agricultural technology and an increase of peasants without land owing to its unequal distribution and the increasing pressure to acquire this resource; c) Poverty and the slow and unequal development of rural areas are factors which aggravate the particular disadvantages of women; d) Poverty and rural underdevelopment have a further negative effect in that they reinforce

/male domination,

male domination, since in these circumstances what is involved is the unequal burden of poverty as between women and men. The conclusion reached is that what is needed is a strategy for dealing with the special problems of women in the context of the wider problems of rural poverty; underdevelopment and apathy are considered to be results of the lack of political power.

The resolutions of the Copenhagen Conference reflected the content of the background document. The importance of women in food production was recognized, and at the same time emphasis was laid on the need to increase food production at the family level. Hence it was recommended that women should be provided with the resources required for them to increase their productivity and thus ensure the supply of food for the family and the community. From this same standpoint, it was recommended that women should have access to other resources, such as instruction in appropriate technology, marketing practices, and food processing, as well as access to credit and financial mechanisms on an equal footing with men, and that they should be encouraged to take part in rural community organizations, such as co-operatives and others.

At the Third Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean (Mexico City, August 1983), 4/ reference was made to the violence prevailing in the region as a threat to peace, and to the economic crisis which the Latin American countries were experiencing, which affects women, mainly through unemployment. It was proposed that the status of women should be examined in this context, since its improvement largely depended on the present situation being improved.

2. The Latin American scene: the processes of the last three decades

The current situation of Latin American women can be better understood by referring to the main processes that have taken place in the region over the last thirty years.

Industrialization, as a response to the policy of import substitution, was one of the most important processes initiated in the 1950s. The fact of the growth of the manufacturing industry, whose share in the GDP ranged from 18 to 24%, is eloquent; the same is true of the increase in quantity and variety of exports: in 1950, 95% of these were primary products; while in 1960, the share of commodities was only 20%. 5/

After this stage there was an intensification of trade which lasted until 1974: the region raised its imports owing to the special facilities for external indebtedness, as a result of which the product has now fallen in many cases and there is serious external strangulation.

Meanwhile the population has grown from 158 million to 352 million between 1950 and 1980, at a rate of 2,7% per year, one of the highest in the world. Coupled with this growth there are the well-known phenomena of urbanization and metropolitanization and the change from rural predominance, (57% in 1950), to urban predominance in 1980, with 63% of the population living in urban areas. In 1950 only four countries were predominantly urban (Argentina, Chile,

/Uruguay and

Uruguay and Venezuela); this now applies to 11 countries. 5/

This urbanization is reflected in the location of labour, which shows a major transfer from agricultural to non-agricultural activities. The agricultural EAP has decreased from 54% of the total EAP in 1950 to 30%, according to estimates for 1980. Since 1960 industry has not had the capacity to absorb rural migration; this explains the extent of urban poverty. The labour force has come to be concentrated in informal activities of low productivity. Thus there is a manifest narrowing of the gap between less skilled urban activities and agricultural wages which might be termed a slow but sustained transfer of rural poverty to the urban habitat. 7/

Another change that has caused important transformations in Latin American agriculture is the gradual integration of physical space. This greater integration the result of the construction of a transport network, has made it possible to link territories that were previously isolated or had communication difficulties.

To the positive results of the industrial stage must be added the advances in basic services: electricity, gas, water, sanitation services and transport. In 1982 the share of services as a whole had risen to close on 57% of the GDP. The changes that have occurred in society as a whole, including metropolitanization and urbanization, industrialization, transnationalization, the development of financial markets and the expansion of the market economy and the consumer society present a very different picture in rural areas and agrarian structures.

The modernization of agriculture is part of the process of import substitutic and its role was to provide cheap food and, as it were, to subsidize industrial growth. 8/ The effects of this transformation are felt at many levels. One of the most conspicuous is the disappearance of the latifundism-minifundism system, the former having been replaced by more modern enterprises. The haciendas made changes aimed at increasing their productivity and efficiency or at dealing with the threat which the agrarian reform posed to their production systems; this brought the expulsion of resident workers and their replacement by temporary workers living outside. As regards the minifundios, pressure on the land, the fall in price of peasant products and the lack of permanent employment led to an increase in the poverty of the peasantry and a growing incapacity to support the family on the basis of the farm produce of the family unit. Solutions were sought in two ways, i.e., emigration or the sale of temporary labour.

3. Predominant types of agricultural economies

In order to find out how these changes affect rural units and especially women, various attempts have been made to typify agricultural producer families; these will be discussed later on in this paper.

For the purposes of this study, it would seem best, for the time being, to address the problem in more general terms. We shall first define the various areas of agricultural economy and then try to describe the different types of families in each economy. For this purpose, broadly speaking, we may define three areas of agricultural economy in the region: the traditional, the modern, and the settlement economies. These are the categories that were proposed by FAO at the Round Table on Survival Strategies in Peasant Economies (Bogotá, November 1983).

/a) The

a) The traditional agricultural economy

As a result of the changes that have occurred in the agricultural sector, there have now arisen new nuclei of minifundistas, semi-proletarianized peasants or families of migrant peasants. In this paper, however, this heading refers to traditional minifundia and indigenous communities, which include the different peasant strata, the internal processes of differentiation and the peasant economies.

The concern with peasant units is not new. The concept of the "peasant economy" proposed by Thorner in 1962, has been adopted officially in Latin America. The adoption of this concept, validated in particular by Chayanov, reflects a new approach to that which, in a less comprehensive way, was commonly called the family holding. The concept of the "peasant economy" emphasizes the functioning and rationality of the family holding and especially it underscores the fact that they are still valid and vital, by contrast with the schools of thought that saw the peasantry as being in process of extinction as an inevitable law of rural capitalism.

Without embarking on the polemic of future of the peasantry, it can be assumed that it will still be around for a long time, though in other forms, probably in the guise of rural semi-proletarians. At all events, and in terms of rural poverty and of the concern for rural women and families, they continue to be a focal point of concern in policy-making.

Thus, there has been a conceptual reassessment of the peasant economy, particularly because of what it represents in terms of : number of holdings, food production, commercial production for domestic and external markets, employed labour force and magnitude of population. It has been established that, during the 1970s, more than half the rural population (55%) was composed of peasant families, that is, between 60 and 65 million persons. Sixty-two per cent of rural households were poor households; 4.9 million families had units of under two hectares. Even so, their production supplied two-fifths of the domestic market of the region and one-third of the export market and they received 35% of the total agricultural revenue of the region.

For purposes of comparison, it should be mentioned that medium-sized farmers represented 28% of the agricultural population and obtained 43% of the agricultural income. The large landowners represented 2% of the rural population and received 22% of the income of the sector. According to PREALC data, 35% of the agricultural labour force of the region was employed by entrepreneurial agriculture and 65% by peasant agriculture. 10/

Nevertheless, this peasant sector is developing in conditions of increasing poverty. Standardized estimates have been obtained for 12 countries, around 1980, which distinguish between rural households living in indigence and those living in poverty. In two countries, poverty extends to almost the whole of the rural population (Bolivia and Haiti); in another five (Brazil, Colombia, Honduras, Paraguay and Venezuela), it affects around two-thirds of rural households; in four

/(Chile, Ecuador,

(Chile, Ecuador, Jamaica and Panama) it extends to close on half the families in the rural area and in only one (Grenada), to a quarter of the population. The conditions of indigence are more serious in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia and Panama than in the rest of the countries. 11/

Poverty has led the families to devise what some call survival strategies and others, reproduction strategies. These expressions indicate the way in which the family organizes and mobilizes its resources to satisfy its basic needs and ensure the reproduction of its living standard. In pursuing this objective, the peasant unit forms itself around the family as a unit of production and reproduction in it, the woman plays a central role. All the members of the family are involved and the activities of one are related to those of the rest. The internal functioning of this family unit has been conceptualized and the fact that it acquires rationality in face of external changes has been shown. It is said, that, in order to accomplish its aims, the peasant unit applies certain reproductive patterns (age of union, number and spacing of children, etc.); it develops norms on the handling of income; it distributes daily time among the members; it develops norms on disposal of the family income (who, how and for what), and so forth.

The studies show how the peasant unit functions on the basis of a gender-based division (or sexual, as it has been called hitherto) of labour. The examples of a working day and of its gender-based division are numerous.

Mention has already been made of the role of peasant economies in food production and how they help supply cheap foods which have made possible urban and rural growth. Nonetheless, it must be noted that the deterioration caused by this imbalance in the interchange of resources has provoked an economic crisis and disintegration in the peasant economies. This situation has compelled the various members of the family unit increasingly to join the labour force as semi-proletarians and proletarians; this implies, on the one hand, a subsidy to the costs of reproduction of the manpower employed by the capitalist sector, both agricultural and industrial, and, on the other hand, the weakening of the bargaining power of this sector with respect to the demands made on the State by other sectors of the population. 12/

This very fact may explain in part the persistence of peasant economies, inasmuch as they are functional in the context of the production rationale of capitalist enterprises. This form of functioning has been extensively analysed in different cases of agrarian structures in the region. The following statement gives an example of what happens in semi-proletarianization: "In social terms, this phenomenon leads to the establishment of semi-proletarianization of the peasantry as the specific form which the exploitation of the workforce takes on at this stage of capitalist agrarian development. "Capitalists and large land-owners do not want the final de-peasantization of their potential manpower, for both economic and for political reasons", 13/ This has also made it possible to say that the peasant is not in a state of transition nor is he marginated from the system".

/Emphasis has

Emphasis has been placed on the importance of land to the traditional peasant economies; hence the increasing trends towards the reconcentration of farms into great latifundia and towards the atomization of parcelas imply the destruction of the traditional peasant way of life, with the disintegration of the forms of reciprocity in production and in community social organization.14/

It is likewise necessary to consider the particular stage at which the peasant economies find themselves within the dynamic processes of change, since this is what determines how they are articulated in the market and makes it possible to point out certain aspects pertaining to women.

The articulation of peasant economies with commercial export agriculture has worsened the situation of the food-producing peasant woman and has attracted young female workers of peasant origin to the modern agro-industrial sector, where they are hired with generally unfavourable working conditions and social benefits. The mecanization of agriculture has reduced requirements for manpower in general and for male workers in particular, but has also reduced the employment opportunities of women in some situations.

The pressure on the land, the exhaustion of productive resources, and the lack of local or regional employment opportunities force the population to migrate either temporarily or permanently. Young women are the first to migrate; the cohorts of 15 to 19 and 20 to 24 years of age predominate among the age groups. Their departure is in line with family strategies in which the first to leave is the eldest daughter, who sends home contributions to the upkeep of the younger children until it becomes necessary for a second or third child to leave. This process has been studied by Arizpe (1980), in a study which has become a classic in Latin America. 15/ The higher proportion of female migration is shown by the figures of 100 women to every 85 men recorded in the rural-urban emigration in the region during the past three decades. 16/ The intensity of the rural exodus, provoked by the lack of paid and permanent labour, violence in the countryside and the lack or inadecuacy of basic services, has pulled young peasant women away from their communities without offering them adequate opportunities for social and economic integration, especially in the large cities.

The growth of poverty in the traditional peasant economy has prevented familie from continuing to support elderly women, widows, and single or separated women. This situation is acknowledged in all the countries where poverty is prevalent. This fact is pointed out in similar terms in a 1981 ILO document, which states that: The stereotyped concept of family solidarity is another dangerous myth. Poverty increasingly compels large families to abandon women in difficulties (widowed or separated, and women with children) who have to seek employment outside the home, 17/ or be reduced to begging.

b) The modern agricultural economy

In Latin America, the development of capitalist agriculture is concentrated in the branches of production that are associated with the export markets or with the domestic markets, which are usually favoured by State action.

/i) The main

i) The main features of modernization

The transformation of the hacienda into a modernized agricultural enterprise abruptly expelled the peasant unit from access to land; it broke traditional ties, uprooting it and casting it into an imperfect labour market. This social cost of this process has been reflected in phenomena of violence, disintegration and migration.

Generally speaking, capitalist agriculture is specialized, is highly capitalized, and operates with complete technical packages aimed at raising labour productivity. The benefits of public as well as private investment are concentrated in this type of agriculture. 18/

Capitalist agriculture generates little permanent employment, this having been replaced by temporary labour. The demand for temporary manpower is confined to certain periods of the year and generates employment for short periods, the rest of the year being "dead time" as regards the demand for labour.

The modern sector uses a package of machinery and very high levels of industria inputs, whereby the technological gaps between this and the peasant economy widen, producing very marked differences between both the yields and the incomes of the two types of economic organization. Further, the technological pattern followed has increased external dependence in respect of agricultural machinery and inputs.

ii) Rural villages, new areas of localization of agricultural manpower

One of the side effects of the modernization of agriculture has been the emergence of small human groups of a precarious nature in river valleys, at the side of roads, in small naturally sheltered places or "nooks" in valleys, at the side of gullies, on the slopes of hills, and so forth. They are partly made up of the population contingents expelled from haciendas or latifundia by the processes of agricultural modernization, whereby inquilinos, huasipungueros, colonos and others are forced to leave. Also included in these groups are the poor of the countryside, the landless peasants, recently uprooted from areas of former minifundia.

This type of habitat includes the communities of forest women, who constitute a unique human group in areas of timber exploitation or forestry plantations. Since the places of employment are very distant, the women and children are preferably kept in places near means of communication or rural and urban centres, since the men remain away for several months. These same landless peasants or recent proletarians are also settling on the periphery of villages and towns where there is a demand for agricultural manpower, generally in agroindustrial establishments. This is where the most unstable segment of the agricultural labour force has established itself, i.e., the boias frias of Brazil, as well as certain sectors of the labour force in Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and other nations. At times, the Andean towns have come to serve as bedroom communities for the labour force.

/c) Areas

c) Areas of expansion of the agricultural frontier

In some countries policies of agricultural frontier expansion are still applied, either through directed settlement or spontaneous settlement. It is a system that has been used as a means of reducing pressure on land or as a form of capitalist expansion in rural areas through concessions to national or transnational enterprises. The most notable examples of colonization at present are found in Brazil (the Amazon), Paraguay, the east of Bolivia, mountain-slopes in Peru and the coast in Ecuador, and also in Central America (Guatemala). Settlement as a form of modernization, with strong state incentives, is very common in Brazil, particularly in the Amazon region. This area has witnessed a growing penetration of large transnational and national conglomerates and access to land is controlled by a minority. Settlement has sharpened the contrasts where exploitation and progress, semi-slavery and large-scale capital, violence and economic growth do not separate like water and oil, but blend together to make possible the penetration of the frontier. 19/

In conditions of this type, when there are no major towns since the area involved is one of penetration, special forms of hiring labour are employed. On the one hand, there are systems of the "settler" type used in other periods, for example, on coffee plantations (in the middle of the nineteenth century) in Colombia, where as a means of attaching the workers to the land they are granted a piece of land for their subsistence. In this way the poor smallholder produces his own sustenance, enabling the enterprise to use his labour at a very reduced cost.

In other situations, workers are hired as seasonal labour. The hiring is done by intermediaries such as gatoes or contractors who include the whole family work force in the deals, including women and children. Data from the 1970 agricultural and livestock census in Brazil show that there were 2 900 000 children under 14 working in agricultural establishments; this figure represents 30% of the population between the ages of 10 and 14. 20/

Moreover, the mass settlement of the Amazon region, the population of which almost tripled in three decades (from 1940 to 1970), thus rising from 1 400 000 to 3 600 000, makes one think of the numerous problems that must have occurred at the family level: the cultural change involved in the technologies used, the type of environment and crops, the responsibilities and the type of work to be done both inside and outside the family unit.

In spontaneous settlements, peasants occupy the land on their own account and this produces a type of settlement with the haphazard features of a nascent "community".

Different types of settlement create different forms of peasant economies: Spontaneous settlements tend to generate traditional peasant economies which are highly precarious and of a subsistence type; in directed settlements, the peasant economy has a less precarious structure and is more dynamic in development.

/As regards

As regards peasant subsistence strategies and their relation to domestic chores, common patterns were found in the peasant economies existing in both types of settlement in respect of the time spent by women on these tasks, which is highly significant (care of the household, preparation of food, etc.) 21/

As regards productive tasks, there are certain differences. In areas of directed settlement, women tend to take a greater part in productive labour, since more profitable crops require an intensive use of family labour and consequently of female labour, depending on the technology used. In spontaneous settlements, manual labour is used, in directed settlements, machinery is used.

The factors that influence female labour have to do with the physical conditions of the area of settlement. For example, if it is wooded, they have to clear the forest by felling trees and burning off the brush; this work is labour-intensive, and in these cases, women play a very important part in production tasks.

Settlements generally consist of young married or consensual couples and women have a greater part to play in the tasks of production, up to the time when the children are able to assume part of the burden.

The insecurity accompanying the process of establishing spontaneous settlement gives rise in some cases to disorganized family units (incomplete families). In this type of situation, the productive work of the women is necessarily very intense.

A greater amount of background data on the subject of settlement would be needed to give an idea of what the most outstanding problems of the future will be. This is undoubtedly an aspect on which not enough information is available and what is must be systematized to cover several aspects, i.e. conditions of work and contracts; types of families that occur and their problems, reproductive patterns, manpower and the effect on labour of the tendency to turn extensive areas over to livestock; the effect in some zones (in Paraguay, for example) of a rapid subdivision of plots in projects aimed at forming a sector of medium-sized farmers; the depredation of agrological resources with the application of cultivation systems which require great experience and care, such as the "clear, fell and burn" which is generally practised as a form of itinerant cultivation to permit the regeneration of the soil; the effects of massive deforestation, especially in the Amazon region, which is the "green lung" of the world.

B. RURAL WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA

1. Some generalities on the knowledge acquired

A review of official documents of world and regional conferences, meetings, workshops and round tables (which in their turn are based on the collection and interpretation of secondary data, government documents, and research and studies conducted by ECLAC) 22/ along with a review of the results of research carried out in the region, and the discussions and conclusions of symposia and seminars on specific aspects relating to rural women, give a broad view of the road travelled in the study of this subject, and also of the gaps and errors that still persist in this field of knowledge.

/It can

It can be said that at the time of writing this paper, several aspects have been sufficiently studies and clarified. These include the domestic role, or the role of women in the daily and generational reproduction of the labour force, which can be characterized, evaluated, etc.; the gender-based (or sexual) division of labour; the use of methodologies of "time budgeting" or, currently, of "pattern of activities"; the productive role of agriculture and variations according to social insertion; the "other" activities carried out by women in order to earn income; the measurement of the EAP, basically propounded a methodological problem; the sale of labour; the role of women in the survival strategies of peasant groups; the stage in the life cycle as a factor determinin the amount and type of activities women perform, and the social and cultural rol they play in their communities.

The knowledge accumulated so far prompts us to make certain observations of a general nature. In the first place, women have been defined as a group of individuals defined by their class situation and by the social roles assigned to them, based on the biological fact of sex. In the second place, the unit of analysis currently in use is the family unit; this implies a conceptual clarity and position-taking after a variety of attempts. In the third place, it has become necessary at this stage to disaggregate the members of peasant units according to gender,23/ position and age in the family nucleus, in order to understand their specific contributions, needs and problems. In the fourth place the topics dealt with up to now in research studies show a strong economic bias, as they are concerned with the productive woman, "the economic woman", they were done during the stage when the participation of women, had to be demonstrated, since it had been assumed in several documents that they were marginated. In the fifth place, there has been a qualitative change in the interpretation of the roles assigned to rural women in recent years, i.e., from being the "preparer, storer and seller of food", as they were described in 1975, they have become recognized as playing a most important role in food production.

Despite the economic emphasis and the treatment given to the specific status of women, there has not been sufficient stress on the impact which the phenomena that have been studied extensively at the producer level, such as male proletarianization and the migratory process, have had on women and on the family. It has not been shown how the proletarianization of men generally leads to the proletarianization of women and how the emigration of the husband or father changes the life of the wife and the family. Thus, households are often headed by women, families break down, the number of nuclear families increases and extended families decrease, there is an increase in one-person households, fertility rates fall, the age of union or marriage is deferred and sometimes no family is formed.

There is another type of research, distinct from the traditional one analysed, which comprises consciousness-raising workshops, the use of case histories or of testimonies, and participative research. These methods are aimed at promoting knowledge of a woman as a person: her conflicts, her perception of herself, of her roles, of her environment, of society; her needs and aspirations, etc. In this regard, only a few results are available and they will be analyzed in due course. At this point, it can be said that it is worthwhile pursuing such research, which complements the findings of the more familiar type of research.

/2. Attempts

2. Attempts to tipify rural women

Research papers on rural women reveal a great interest in studying them in specific situations, they show that women are defined first of all by the head of the family, whether husband, father or brother. These attempts at typification began in 1978 at the Workshop on the impact of agricultural modernization on the participation of rural women (Mexico, 1978), mentioned previously in this paper. There attention was drawn to the different situations in families characterized by subsistence status, temporary migration, wage-earning wife, and female heads of households through migration of the husband.

A 1979 study shows how poor rural women are affected by agricultural modernization in different cases (structural, in production situations and others). An account is given of how women live in closed peasant communities and open mestizo communities (both in Central America), in situations linked with export production, in cases of urban-rural migration, in capitalist agriculture, in agrarian reform, in a capitalist framework and in a socialist framework (Cuba).24/

In 1982 and 1983, various studies represented more systematic attempts to differentiate peasant strata. In a 1982 study, the behaviour of different material indicators is analysed, i.e., on education and health, migratory patterns, family activity and composition by age groups and strata or classes. Three classes of women are defined: the wives of agricultural wage-earners, wives of small agricultural producers and wives of medium-sized agricultural producers. An attempt is also made to penetrate cultural patterns through an analysis of family relationships: those of the couple on the one hand, and of mother and child, on the other.

In another study of the same year, a similar attempt at typification is made at the family level (both rural and urban). Not only is the situation of class identified but also that deriving from different locations. Thus, a distinction is made between rural families, those of small agricultural producers, those of seasonal wage-earners in the plantation sector, those of the Bolivian altiplano and those of the Caribbean. 25/

There is also another classification based on the use of census data. In this, poor women are classified according to a crossing of residence variables (urban or rural) with that of insertion in the labour market according to economic sector (not incorporated, agricultural, secondary and tertiary). Eight categories of rural and urban women are established. Rural women are classified as follows: peasant housewife, farm worker and two types of women of rural origin working in an urban environment, i.e., the indigenous vendor and the domestic servant.26/

To these categories might be added those of women in areas of settlement, either spontaneous or directed, who set up family enterprises or take up work on large haciendas or commercial units; forest women, women who work at crafts, and others not yet sufficiently typified. In other words, women may be classified according to predominant types of economy, systems of crop cultivation, activities,

/and also

and also according to major geographical areas of a country,i.e., in the Andean countries; women of the altiplano, those of the sierra and those of the coast; in Chile, those of the rain-fed and the irrigated regions, those of the coastal mountain range and those of the central valley.

What is clear is that there is not one type of rural woman, and that it is necessary to know the different types of women in the concrete situations of countries and regions.

We shall now discuss the situations of women in peasant economies, taking into account the internal social stratification. We shall then consider women in light of their main activities i.e., craftswomen, vendors and others, with agricultural wage-earners being treated as a special case. So far, we have not studied the case of women in different geographical areas within each country.

3. Women in peasant units

a) The role of women in peasant economies: reproduction of the labour force

Of the many roles performed by women, the most obvious is that of household chores,i.e., the reproduction of the labour force, and the daily tasks involved in ensuring its survival.

Progress has been made in the conceptualization and description of this function of women. It has been underlined, in the first place, that the family or the family unit is not only the nucleus which generates and transmits the values, norms and attitudes that orient the individual and collective behaviour of the member of a society and the institution that mediates between the individual and the social group, 27/ but that, as a specific unit, it is responsible for reproduction, i.e., the reproduction of the overall population is the responsibility of the family unit and of women, through their daily domestic work.

It has also been pointed out that housework is a social fact and that there is a contradiction between this and the way it is undervalued, on the one hand, and, on the other, the fact that at least some aspects of this work are not socialized.

It is evident that in different class situations, different survival strategies are brought into play which involve differences in the division of labour by sex and by age and in the participation of family members in paid economic activity. In the lowest strata, there is seasonal or permanent migration and an early use of paid child labour.

It has been said that female work is a dynamic process, with numerous tasks overlapping each other throughout the day; this explains why sometimes the work day lasts for as long as 16 to 18 hours. The rural woman's chores are done in difficult material conditions, often without piped water or electricity and in areas where the terrain is very rugged. The diversity of a woman's work is not appreciated owing to the undervaluing of occupations which do not bring in income. This is corroborated by the women themselves who, when asked if they work, invariably say "no".

/One of

One of the aforementioned studies points out that society assigns to domestic units the responsibility of producing, reproducing and maintaining the life of the population and to women the responsibility of operating these units, while at the same time belittling their social importance. It has also been stated that the work of peasant women cannot be separated from that of the rest of the family, since it is considered that the total family income is the product of the work of all family members, and this includes the productive and reproductive spheres. Hence, a woman's work should be regarded as productive even though it does not directly generate income but rather enables the unit to reproduce itself. 28/

b) The problem of measuring a woman's work

It is now recognized that the participation of women is very important in agricultural production; however, it is difficult to evaluate this participation. FAO indicated in 1983 that, according to the most conservative statistics taken from agricultural censuses, 19% of all women participate in the agricultural labour force in Latin America and 54% do so in the Caribbean 29/. Both statistics indicate the method by which the data were obtained. In the Caribbean, the statistics refer to a period of from six months to one year, while in the rest of the region, they usually refer only to the week prior to the survey.

The problem of how census information underestimates the participation of women was noted as long ago as 1958 by Gertrude Bancroft. A study by Wainerman and Recchini de Lattes set out in 1981 to evaluate the quality of census information 30/.

The causes of underestimation are various: there are difficulties with respect to how questions are asked, how much encouragement is given by the inquirer and his own stereotypes concerning work. The most important problem, however, is the period to which the survey refers. Frequently the questionnaire relates to the week before the census, which means that the seasonlaity of agricultural work is not taken into account. In order to do this, the reference period should be 12 months. (Some countries use longer periods, e.g., Haiti uses six months; Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and Barbados, one year). Another problem with this type of measureme is the minimum time considered for regarding a person as active or inactive. Each country adopts different criteria concerning the minimum time.

Household surveys and demographic surverys, which are made on the basis of population samples, give better and more accurate information on the number of women that belong to the EAP. This is because the aims are different; greater accuracy is sought and the inquirers are specially trained. Some comparisons between the results of census measurements and those of household surveys show significant differences. In Panama, the conceptual definitions of the EAP are similar; however, the census inquired only once about alternatives for economic activity and collected information relating to only one day. The household survey made repeated inquiries about activities throughout the course of the year. The difference between female participation rates in the two types of measurement was over 10% and even reached 40% in some cases. In Sao Paulo, the household survey shows that the census undercounted active women by between 14 and 33%, in the case of men the figure was between 2 and 6%. In Bolivia the survey found between 33 and 48% more active women than the census. In the case of rural woman aged between 20 and 39, these percentages exceeded 50%.

/More exact

More exact measurements are needed, in the first place, to visualize the participation of women correctly. If their present role in production is not adequately assessed they may for example, suffer serious disadvantages in agricultural programmes. Clearly, with the domestic and agricultural technologies that are available to them, it would be impossible for rural women to produce more, as they are fully occupied by their share in household tasks and in farming, plus other activities to which reference will be made further on. Hence, it can be said as Marshall Wolfe did that in this context, exhortations to play a greater part in the labour force border on the ironical. 31/

c) The contribution of women to work in agricultural production

It is now known that women take part in most of the agricultural tasks of the peasant unit, usually those which are done manually or which require only small tools. They work mainly in clearance or weeding and in harvesting, i.e., they "break" maize, "cut" peas and beans, "dig" potatoes, they "reap" wheat. They also sow, plant nurseries, transplant and water... It is evident that women are not excluded from any type of cultivation for reasons of a cultural nature... and their collaboration is determined by the real need that exists on the farm for their labour. 32/

Women are marginated from the use of machinery and larger tools. In this there are both cultural factors and the assumptions of government and international agencies who regard men as the only subjects of agricultural projects. They are also excluded from the use of modern aids such as insecticides and fertilizers. Nor do they know anything about specific farming techniques such as pruning, graftin and others.

i) Participation in cultivation according to headship of household and peasant stratification

Women are heads of household in 15% on average of the family units in Latin America, and in 20% in Central America (with great variations within and between the countries, e.g., 37% in Ojopoi, a settlement area in Paraguay). This status increases the weight of the agricultural work they have to do, which is devoted mainly to subsistence crops. In Colombia, women are generally in charge of coffee plantations of less than one hectare, since the men emigrate in search of employment In plantations of between 1 and 5 hectares, women take part in selection and harvesti In plantations of over 5 hectares, belonging to "rich" peasants, the housewife does not work on the coffee crop, since labour is hired to do it. 33/

In the northern sierra of Perú (Cajamarca) Carmen Deere studied the participati of the family labour force according to sex and size-of-land stratum. Her conclusion are shown in Table 1.

/Table 1

Cajamarca, Perú:

Table 1

PARTICIPATION OF THE FAMILY LABOUR FORCE BY SEX AND SIZE-OF-LAND STRATUM ACCORDING TO NUMBER OF WORKING DAYS IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Type of peasants	Percentage of units =	Manpower Female (percentage)	Male	Total
Landless peasants(less than 0.25 ha)	0.3	35.0	65.0	100
Small holders(0.25 to 3.50 ha)	71.3	26.9	73.1	100
Medium-sized (3.51 to 30.0 or more ha)	18.5	20.8	79.2	100

Source: C.D. Deere, La división por sexo del trabajo agrícola: un estudio de la Sierra Norte del Perú, Lima, Perú, 1978.

In the low strata 84.3% of the women worked directly on the land. 34/ Deere links volume of work with type of crop and use of tools. The greater the poverty the greater the participation in tasks which require the hoe (71.0%) and in the growing of potatoes (63%), while in the higher strata, only 50% of the women farmers used the hoe and 39% grew potatoes. 35/ In Mexico (Oaxaca), Kate Young noted that, in a current coffee community, there is a marked difference between the work done by poor women(on holdings of up to 1 ha), those of the middle strata (holdings of less than 5 ha) and rich women (holdings of more than 5 ha). The poor women worked on the family farm and sold their labour, often to pay debts for food bought on credit in times of famine, which the men had obtained in exchange for a promise of the wife's work in the coffee harvest at the time of peak demand. In the case of the medium-sized peasants, who were coffee growers, their wives constitute unpaid family labour; in the harvesting of coffee, they also work on the farms of relatives in labour"exchange" systems. Women of the rich strata do not do any farm work. At harvest time they organize the workers and work in small family businesses e.g. a shop, mill, restaurant or others).36/

During the harvest, which lasts three months, the medium-sized peasant women work up to 17 hours a day. They pick coffee for 8 hours, do the housework and help to wash, depulp, dry and classify the coffee beans.

In Chile their participation in farming activities increases in the higher strata, because there is greater diversification of crops and tasks and the farms are larger. In stock-raising work also increases as the size of the poultry flock increases and more cows have to be milked.

In addition to the above tasks, in the medium and higher strata women also work in the preparation of meals when there are hired workers, family workers or those repaying labour or doing overtime or working under other reciprocal arrangement Carmen D. Deere noted that kitchen work raises a woman's share in the total number of days worked in agricultural activities by 38%. The time of peak demand for women in all strata is the harvest season, either because they work in the family unit or because they sell their labour.

/ii) Participation

ii) Participation in stock-raising

Women are generally excluded from the care of the larger cattle: the shifting of these animals, branding, castrating, inoculating, etc. are tasks which are the preserve of men. On the other hand, the women have the care of the smaller animals (poultry, pigs, sheep, goats). The type of animal varies according to region and economic stratum. In Chile, for example, the poorer sectors of the north and centre of the country raise goats; in the south, the Mapuche communities raise sheep. In central Chile, peasant women raise pigs and poultry, and in the higher strata, cows. In the Andean regions of Chile, Peru and Bolivia, women herd sheep and llamas. It is their job to feed or take the animals to pasture. In the case of goats, they milk them and make cheese; in the case of sheep and llamas, they spin and weave; in the case of cows, they milk them and make cheese and butter.

d) Other activities

In order to supplement the family income, women engage in a large number of activities in addition to their household and farming tasks. The chief of these are trade, handicrafts and sale of services. Women usually perform two or three different activities; this has been termed "female multi-employment".

i) Female traders

Female trading takes many forms and includes many lines. The most usual type is that of street selling, although they may also have fixed posts in street and other markets. It is so common in the Andean region, Mexico and some countries of Central America that it has been proposed as a special category of poor rural women 38/. The products sold are small surpluses of farm production, generally garden produce or harvest surpluses; prepared meals, chicha (a beverage), eggs, poultry, meat, clothing, handicrafts, etc. In the central sierra of Peru, 61.4% of the women devote themselves to trade 39/. In a study of four regions of Peru, Villalobos found variations in the main activities: in one case in the sierra, trade was the main activity for 44% of the women; in another case, the percentage was 84.5% 40/. Surprisingly little value is attached to household tasks, which appear to be ranked second or third in importance. These are cases where the men emigrate temporarily which would indicate that, as far as the women are concerned, housework can easily give way to another activity, according to their needs and family structure.

ii) Female artisans

In most of the rural sectors of Mexico and Central America, as well as in the Andean countries, handicrafts play a large part in supplementing family income. It has been said that in Mexico, in practically all rural towns of less than 10 000 inhabitants, three quarters of the population work in handicrafts. The making of cotton cloth, the weaving of fibre hammocks, the embroidering of blouses and suits and the making of baskets are the main crafts practised by women in Mexico, Central America, Colombia and Ecuador. In the Andean region of Peru and Bolivia, the most usual crafts are the spinning of wool, the weaving of clothing, blankets, and rugs, and the making of hats and other articles. In the Southern Cone and Atlantic coast of Latin America, handicraft are less important: the woolen textiles of the Mapuches and crochet work in central Chile, textiles in Uruguay ("Hands of Uruguay"), embroidery and crochet work in Brazil are the best known.

/There have

There have been contradictory developments with regard to handicrafts. On the one hand, it is said that the need to produce for the market has made traditional craft work disappear in some cases in Peru. 41/ On the other hand, the introduction of some modern elements (for example, grain mills for maize) has given women more free time, which they have devoted to handicrafts. In the maize-growing region of Yucatán, around 70% of the women and children are engaged in these crafts.

In many cases, through the use of a system of intermediaries for marketing, the production of handicrafts has become a home industry which is paid as piece work. The earnings are minimal; it has been estimated that a craftswoman receives for a week's work the same as a day's pay for a man working outside the town. It should also be noted that the incorporation of women and children into the work of earning a money income has made household economy more dependent on the market.

State intervention in various projects aimed at avoiding intermediation and improving prices has failed because of a lack of financial and commercial capacity to regulate the supply of finished products and purchase a significant proportion of the product locally. 42/

There are two practices in relation to the origin and marketing of handicrafts, i.e., traditional craftwork carried on as to supplement the family income and performed along with other domestic tasks; and modern craftwork, which becomes the primary activity the product of which is sold to intermediaries who convert it into a home industry paid as piece work, with the disadvantages pointed out by Warman.

An experiment that is being conducted in Chile suggests that the most recommendable procedure is that the craftswoman should work in her genuinely free time and continue to regard handicrafts as a secondary activity; that any project of the State or non-governmental agencies should include handicrafts in comprehensive projects relating to women; and that the problem of marketing should be dealt with by external agents. Thus conceived, these projects could become "growth" projects for women which would enable them to gain other types of knowledge and training (from accounting to health). At the same time, they would enable women to set up their own organizations, to have different spaces and to link themselves with the outside world through exhibitions and fairs, to mention only a few aspects.

e) Factors which determine participation by women

The degree of participation by women in each of the activities mentioned is conditioned by a series of factors that have already been amply described 44/. These factors are access to land and size of the holding (which was evident to some extent in the crops); stage in the family cycle, which is mainly influenced by the number, sex and age of the children; composition of the family; technology used and prevailing cultural patterns, which have to do with what a woman "can" or "should" do.

4. The proletarianization of rural women

The modernization of agriculture with the expulsion of peasants from long-established haciendas, the changes in some sectors to less labour-intensive crops, the breaking down of the peasantry into areas of small holdings and/or communities, have had two basic effects: emigration and proletarianization. Up to now this process had been more visible in the case of men, but it can now be said that it has an equal effect on women in the lower peasant strata and on female agricultural labourers.

/In general,

In general, the different systems used by capital to attach workers to the land have always included female labour, e.g. inquilinaje in Chile, concertaje or compañía in Colombia, colonato in Brazil, huasipungaje in Ecuador, as well as share-cropping contracts or labour by agreement. The man is hired, but it is assumed that the arrangement includes his wife and children 45/, especially in the crops that require a high seasonal intensity of labour such as coffee, tobacco, tea and cotton.

Reference has already been made to the effect on women of the emigration and/or potential sale of male labour. Special emphasis has been placed on the situations that can arise if a woman is semi-proletarianized within her home(through so-called other activities); if she sells her labour locally, as in the case of agroindustries; if she becomes proletarianized and emigrates; and if it is the man who becomes semi-proletarianized or proletarianized, or emigrates. Attention has been directed to the effect of the double working day, or increased participation in agriculture, of headi the household and of the possibility of female emigration. 46/

In this paper we wish to refer to the ways in which women become wage-earners in agriculture, i.e., through the sale of occasional labour on the farm in connection with traditional crops, or the sale of labour on establishments engaged in commercial farming or agroindustry.

a) Semi-proletarianization on the farm

Women are sometimes hired to work on farms belonging to the higher strata of the peasant sector; this generally happens in ambiguous situations in which a wage (lower than the legal wage) is combined with family relationships. The women are accompanied by their children and sometimes whole family groups are involved. The status of rural wage-earner is one of the most difficult for women to accept owing to the negative connotation it has in an environment where she is presumably among peers or equals, i.e. where everyone is a peasant.

b) Proletarianization on commercial farms and packing stations

The incorporation of women into agroindustrial employment depends not only on the internal factors of the family economy but also on the capacity of the system to create jobs and absorb surplus rural labour. Male labour is usually replaced by female labour in times of crisis or as seasonal labour because women accept less pay for the same work, since both society and women themselves have always considered a woman's wage as complementary to a man's earnings.

In commercial agriculture, male labour is often replaced by female labour. In the long run, however, there is a decline in employment for both sexes. The greater capitalization and technification of agriculture leads to a reduction in manpower, and in such cases male participation takes precedence over female participation. Nonetheless, in certain activities preference is given to female labour, and here there is undoubtedly a genuine sexual division of labour. This generally occurs in the handling of fruit -selection, packaging, binding, trimming and other jobs- as well as in work with flowers and vegetables for export.

/A study

A study of female wage-earners should take into account such variables as place of residence, including, semi-proletarians living in rural areas in purely agriculture proletarians living in urban areas, on the periphery of towns, and so forth; marital status, status with respect to motherhood or childlessness and, finally or jointly, differences between work in the countryside and work in packing and processing plants.

i) Sale of labour in crop growing

There is usually a demand for female labour to work with export crops. The women hired are very young, between 14 and 24 years of age, or middle-aged, over 35 years (e.g., in the flower industry in Colombia, in fruit-growing in Chile, and in vegetable crops in Mexico). The women who are mothers joing the wage-earning labour force when they have at least one child old enough to take care of the rest. Criteria as to the age at which children are able to do this vary; they range from the age of 6 (Colombia) to the age of 12 (Chile).

In addition to being hard, farm work has a negative effect on women because of the image problem: to be a farm labourer is to be at the lowest level in the peasant scale, a level that only ranks above that of a domestic servant.

The various jobs range in duration from 2 to 6 months. In Chile, tasks relating to fruit crops take up little time, from 20 days to slightly over a month per year. Several jobs are given to the same person in order to lengthen the periods of work, so that they work on average for three months and five days per year. Coffee picking may last from one to two months. In the case of coffee grown without shade, the period may be even shorter. In other cases, such as the harvesting of industrial crops in Paraguay and Brazil, the whole family may relocate to the farms for several months. These jobs are usually paid as piece-work or by the task, which is very exhausting.

The most complete example of a female agricultural wage-worker is that of the volantes of Brazil, near Sao Paulo. These women are urban residents, and live on the periphery of the small towns in the interior of Sao Paulo 47/. Seventy-five per cent of them are familiar with rural life and their first job was in the unpaid labour force in agriculture, generally in coffee-growing. More than half of them (60%) began to work at the age of 12. They move from place to place depending on the need for labour. When there is no agricultural work, they hire themselves out as domestic servants in the city; in other words, they combine agricultural and urban work in order to give continuity to their wages throughout the year. Another type of female agricultural wage-worker is the moradora. Moradoras are still peasants living on haciendas, more -than half of whom entered the labour force at the age of 11 as unpaid family workers on coffee plantations.

Over the last 30 years, the use of contractors to mobilize labour has become widespread. The existence of these intermediaries weakens the link between worker and employer exempting the latter from the payment of social benefits. Moreover, the labour force becomes very sensitive to wage variations. In the cities it becomes part of the urban labour market and its wages have to cover the cost of survival in cities, which is higher than that of rural residents. At the present time, children are also hired, but with a minimum age limit of 14 years.

/ii)The ages

ii) The ages of women hired

Enterprises hire women who are either very young or of mature age. In the latter case, it is assumed that the woman's reproductive cycle has ended; the idea is to reduce the costs that would have to be paid for the maternity benefits. Similarly, they prefer to hire women who either have no children or who say they have none, so as to avoid having to pay for family dependents.

This strategy of the enterprises, which prefer women without risk of maternity and apparently without children, is parallel to that of the women who are mothers, who wait for one of their children to be old enough to take care of the rest.

c) Relation between incorporation in wage-earning work and reduction in the number of children

It has been suggested that the number of children, as well as their ages, creates incompatibility between the role of mother and that of worker, and that this is reflected in a reduction in the number of children a woman has. The Round Table on survival strategies in peasant economies, while not denying this statement suggested that some activities are compatible with the duties of motherhood.

In a study conducted in Chile dealt with this issue. In this study, a separate analysis was made of the situation of women who were mothers and that of women without children. The data obtained showed that the entry of mothers into the labour market had no effect either on the number of children or on how long the children live at home. "some 75.1% of the mothers are between 21 and 40 years of age; they have an average of three childeen of ages ranging between 2 and 16.5 years. These households show high levels of fertility (with 4.9 children born alive) and a high percentage of children living at home: 89%.

The data of this study show that a mother's working outside the home does not mean that she will have fewer children or that the children will be forced to migrate at an early age. On the contrary, the percentages are higher in these cases than in those of peasant households. 48/

In Suesca, Colombia, in one of the flower industries that preferentially hire women, 70% of the women were middle aged (an average age of 33 years) and had an average of five children. In Brazil, in the sutdy made in the region of Sao Paulo, the average size of the families of the volantes and moradoras was 6.5 persons..

d) Opinions on work

Opinions vary, depending on who expresses them. First, there are the opinions of the wage-earning women themselves, among whom one must distinguish between childless women and mothers; then there are the views of women who have studied the subject, who analyse the insertion of women into wage-earning work under conditions of marked inequality. Wage-earning women in the flower agroindustry of Colombia see as advantages of their new status the fact that they work on a fixed schedule (in certain tasks); that they earn a wage equal to that which a man would earn in

/the region

the region; that they do not have to humbly obey the orders of a housewife; that they are able to run their own lives and that they can return home in the evening. These are the opinions of former domestic servants who are now agricultural wage-earners. 49/ In the fruit-growing industry (Chile), women who are mothers do not like to work outside the home. They say that they work because they must, in order to buy groceries for the winter and school equipment for the children, and to do some repairs on their homes. Some 66.7% prefer to work at home; otherwise they feel that they are abandoning the home, running about all day, neglecting their children, etc. Young single women without children, on the other hand, view their work situation as positive. They do not mind working in packing stations, especially because there they see and meet people, earn money to buy clothes and to help in the home and with the schooling of their brothers and sisters. However, they do not like to be "ordered about" and prefer "clean" jobs, under cover, and not out on the farm. The ideal for all of them is to work as secretaries. 50/

The specific disadvantages of wage work for women are the double working day, the failure of employers to comply with labour legislation, and the non-payment of the minimum wage on traditional farms. In large enterprises, the disadvantages are employment based on age and refusal of employers to accept pregnant women; lack of nurseries for children; minimal sanitary services; wage discrimination; discrimination in the assignment of tasks involving responsibility; and failure to recognize manual dexterity as a specialized skill.

The unfavourable conditions common to men and women on farms and in agro-industry relate to problems of environmental health and medical care on the job. Examples are the heavy use of insecticides on farms and in packing stations, and the high level of noise which accompanies their work (e.g., in packing stations through the use of pressure hammers and staplers and other tools). Then there is the excess of heat in medium-sized plants due to the construction materials used, such as zinc roofs, and the lack of ventilation systems; the changes of temperature between packing sheds and refrigeration areas; the long work periods, often lasting for 16 hours which, although paid as over-time, are excessively long.

The significance of female wage work has been studied mainly by M.Roldan 51/ She discusses the conception of capitalism according to which it is through work that women are incorporated into development, and the view of feminism, according to which work is a liberating force. Her study refers specifically to a vegetable-exporting plant in northeastern Mexico where more than 90 000 women work as temporary wage-earners.

Enterprises take advantage of the gender-based subordination that women have accepted as natural to maintain differential profit margins, i.e., they hire women for lower-paid jobs. These jobs are less stable, do not require much skill, do not enjoy legal protection and offer little or no opportunity for promotion. In other words, according to Roldan, they are the meanest positions within a hierarchical structure of capitalist labour. The reasons for this situation have to do with qualitative differences which have already been mentioned: women are more careful, more punctual, more delicate, more submissive, more efficient, more accustomed to comply and obey, all of which is the result of a social process of gender-based construction, an "invisible training". Supervisory tasks are performed by men, thus

/transferring the

transferring the division of labour from the home and society to the place of employm Women are thus proletarianized and the burden of pre-existent gender-based subordinat is added to their class situation and reinforced at work.

Nonetheless, the entry of women into the labour market implies a break with traditional norms. The receipt of an independent income helps to create a position of strength, both in the case of daughters in relation to their parents and of wives in relation to their husbands.

5. Income: amount, administration and destination

FAO estimates indicate that women's earnings contribute 50% or more of the family income. The importance of their contribution is no less qualitative than quantitative.

On the one hand, it has been recognized that with these earnings and with those of other members of the family (children and others), indigence has been avoided in between 9 and 15% of cases. Equally, between 35 and 20% of rural households have been saved from falling below the critical poverty line, thanks to this income. It should be made clear that the values are underestimated.

The most important aspect is the destination given by the women to this money, since they give priority to food: The feeding of the children is much more closely linked with an increase in the mother's earnings than with an increase in overall family income. 53/.

a) Income generated in the peasant unit

The most complete report on the use and destination of earnings was made in Peru. According to this report, after the harvest the husband and wife divide the production into three portions, one for seed, another for sale and another for family consumption. The latter two are administered by the wife. The report also states that in some cases the husband turns all his earnings over to his wife for her to administer them; in other cases, the amount appears to be about half. What is clear is that women play an important role in the management of both the harvest and the earnings. 54/

In practice the wife has the responsibility for the daily maintenance of her family group, which implies ensuring the daily meals, and to this she dedicates all her energy. Not only is she a great organizer of her daily and weekly time, which enables her to carry out the man tasks of her expanded domestic routine, but she also goes out, in the case of the women traders, to sell small quantities of produce "for her ají (chili sauce) and her salt". The other activities mentioned above, such as handicrafts, preparation of meals, sale of services, are destined to the same end; the same is true of the sales she makes in situ e.g. eggs, poultry, bread, milk, cheese. Everything is destined to provide and ensure subsistence, which explains the multiplicity of her activities. Although in the myths of the peasantry this woman is spoken of as being submissive, in the background, marginated, it must be remembered that, within her family, it is she who has the greatest responsibilities.

/A woman's

A woman's income in the peasant unit is typically stable and is earned daily. A man's income is earned once a year, at harvest-time, or once or twice more if he sells cattle. If the husband is a temporary or a migrant worker, the money will arrive with him, or he will send remittances for the children's school supplies once a year and for religious festivals.

When the man is at home he can manage the money (i.e., income from the harvest and the sale of animals), but the income derived from the wife's activities is for her exclusive use. In addition to assigning it to food, she allocates it to clothing for the children and to their education, which includes enrolment fees, parents' co contributions, supplies, daily transport, etc.

b) Income derived from wage-earning labour

A woman earns wages from seasonal work during the harvest and processing season. These wages usually represent substantial amounts by peasant standards since they are equivalent to industrial wages and are often supplemented by overtime pay. In some regions and countries, they may be equal or even superior to those earned by men, when the work necessarily involves overtime labour. Work in industrial plants is generally allotted by tasks based on a minimum and work in excess of this also earns additional payment. These sums may be as high as US$180 per month. Married women use this money, as in the previous case, to ensure subsistence for the rest of the year, especially during winter in "the blue months" or the months of "John Thin", when things are very difficult economically, since there is no demand for the labour of either men or women. With this money she buys non-perishable goods such as flour, sugar, tea, spaghetti, and some preserves. She also allots a certain amount to ensure the education and clothing of her children. She hardly ever buys anything for herself.

It is interesting to note that the money earned by single women is reserved for the same purposes as that of the mother. In some cases -very few- they handle all their money to the mother; in others, they keep some of it for their own expenses and they assign the rest to the home and to ensure the education of their younger brothers and sisters. In the case of Mexico, the single women have a "pool" to which all contribute without the mother's having an exact idea of what proportion is contributed by each member of the family.55/ It is agreed that this "pool" is administered by the mother, as is the case also of data received on Peru and most of the cases studied in Chile. There is no detailed information on other countries.

C. THE RURAL FAMILY

Several studies have referred, specifically or indirectly, to the rural family. This information taken together shows that the rural family is undergoing change as a result of several phenomena and that it is necessary to bring up to date the knowledge on the subject. The existing stereotypes, such as the prevalence of extended families with early marriages, high fertility levels and permanence of family members, under the authority of the pater familias, must be revised. Today there appears to be a trend towards an increase in the number of nuclear families and a decrease in the number of extended families, an increase in the number of one-person and incomplete families; a reduction and deferment of marriages; a notable decline in the birth-rate; an increase in the number of female heads of household; the proletarianization of women; an increase in the number of absentee fathers, and emigration.

/1. Nuclear versus

1. Nuclear versus extended and incomplete families

As regards the predominant types of families (nuclear, extended, composite or incomplete), it seems evident that the nuclear family is predominant and the trend is for this to increase.

There are also statements found in documents of a regional nature on the fallacy of the idea of the prevalence of extended families 56/. This fact has been observed simultaneously in Chile, Argentina, Peru, Bolivia, Colombia and Brazil, in the studies analysed. This trend varies according to spatial strata and region.

It has been observed that family type, stage of the family cycle, economic status of the producer and regional differences are all interrelated.

In a comparison made in Chile between families of Greater Santiago and families in four rural localities in the central region, it was found that extended families were more numerous in the urban than in the rural areas. 57/

It has been suggested that rural families linked with the labour market tend to be nuclear, whereas those that produce for consumption absorb labour, especially family labour, and give rise to composite or extended families. It appears that, to the extent that land becomes scarce on small properties, and large properties no longer maintain a resident population (hiring only temporary workers), the young population tends to emigrate. If a son marries, he will form his nuclear family apart from the original family. If he becomes a proletarian, the effect is more evident since he can then move nearer to the sources of labour. 58/ In the middle and upper strata, where stable manpower is required, men are incorporated and the families then become extended or composite.

In many cases it has become difficult to separate the nuclear from the extended family and it has been argued that they cannot be considered outside the family cycle. 59/ A new family is often formed within the paternal family after which, at around the age of 30, the son leaves with his own family and constitutes a new nuclear family.

High proportions of extended families are found in the framework of communities; this has been observed in Mexico and Peru. Strong reciprocal relations the ayni system, repayment of labour, work in the homes of relatives and preparation of common meals, all weaken the boundaries between the nuclear and the extended family. Noordam reports that in Bolivia, when brothers inherit land, they build their houses on the same polot, with communicating rooms. They have their meals together and share the care of the children and their work, so that it can be said that family relations are of the extended family type, although the households are nuclear. 60/

The nuclear family is predominant in the Andean region of Colombia (59% of the total). Also, women between the ages of 25 and 40 are in the majority because of the high rate of emigration of men. Some 13% of nuclear households are headed by women. 61/

/In Paraguay

In Paraguay, in two State-directed settlement areas, where the aim was to establish an agriculture of medium-sized farm-owners, the plots of land began to be subdivided through inheritance. New families were formed on the same farms but as far as work is concerned, they continued to act in conjunction with the original family under relations of labour exchange such as the minga and other forms of solidarity. When the men who form new families find themselves obliged to emigrate in order to survive, they usually send their children to be cared for by the grandparents, thereby converting the original families into extended families. A third of the families of these settlements are of this type 62/.

Returning to regional variations in family type, it has been noted that Bolivia also shows marked differences. Nuclear families are found above all in the rural areas of the altiplano, where the percentage of composite households is very low. What occurs is an expulsion of family members as a result of the extreme subdivision of the land, which converts the redistribution of poverty into a relocation of the young people in the monetarized labour market 63/ (Noordam, 1980). In the tropical plains, where there is commercial agriculture. with areas of settlement, there is a low percentage of nuclear households and a larger one of composite households, these reflecting a greater capacity for absorption of and the formation of labour communities.

In Peru, Campaña also observed that the poor families of the sierra are structured around nuclear families. 64/.

Ordóñez observed the same predominance of the nuclear family in Colombia but also found marked regional variations. The lowest percentage is found on the Atlantic coast; this is due to the type of land occupation based on an itinerant agriculture which entails long absences for the men and thereby creates unstable relationships. Family stability is supplied by the woman; she establishe it, on the basis of free unions, and is supported by social mechanisms based on the community, which is often confused with the extended family. 65/

Extended families constitute a third of the families of the country but are also unequally distributed regionally.

In almost all known cases, differences were also found within the various regions or areas. Two examples will suffice. In Chile, a study conducted in a valley showed a predominance of old, nuclear families 66/. However, behaviour varied according to strata. In the group of rural semi-proletarians (Group I) nuclear families were as prevalent as incomplete families, but as regards age there was an absolute predominance (82.9%) of young families. Among the poor'e peasants (Group II), incomplete families were predominant and in contrast to what was seen in the previous group, they were mainly old families. In Group III (peasants as such), young nuclear families were predominant and were followed by extended and composite families. In Group IV (peasants in the middle level), nuclear families were most frequent and were followed by incomplete families, with old families predominating. In a region of Colombia (El Espinal), a clear correlation was found between peasant stratum and family type. In the lower strata (I and II), the nuclear families predominant and is followed by the extende family. In stratum III, the extended family, which includes, in addition to other relatives, the domestic servants. Generally speaking, the nuclear family

/appears to

appears to be predominant in areas of subproletarianization and proletarianization.

It should be noted that there is a high frequency of incomplete families, this being understood as families which are not based on couples. These families consist of single brothers and sisters who live together, or unmarried adult children who live with a widowed parent, generally the mother. In a case studied in Chile, the unmarried status was related to the size of the holding and it was found that 41.7% of single men were owners of areas of under 2.5 hectares, i.e., they belonged to the strata of proletarians and poor peasants. It would seem, then, that failure to form a new family is mainly explained by the economic situation of the persons interviewed. 67/

Another fact worthy of note is the existence of one-person families in some countries. In a study conducted in Chile, a comparison was made between Santiago and four rural areas. It was found that the percentage of households of one-person families was twice as high in the rural communities as in Greater Santiago and that the number of persons who do not form families was higher in rural families. 68/ This was also observed in Chile, Peru and Bolivia. In the latter case, 17% of the families were unipersonal.

There is also evidence of the existence of young couples who have been together for a long time but who continue to live separately in the homes of their parents. In many cases one or two children have been born of these relationships but not even this induces them to live together under the same roof.

In the sierra of the Andean countries, a unique situation has been noted 69/ i.e., the double residence of husbands from agricultural communities. Because they work outside the region, these men leave their homes and families in the community and live in a second home near their place of work. The older children usually go there for school purposes and the wife remains behind in charge of her own and the smaller children's sustenance.

Finally, there appears to be a general tendency in all countries to defer the age at which both men and women form unions. The deferment of unions has been tied in with the changing expectations of agricultural wage-earners and with higher educational levels (Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Colombia). Widespread impoverishment is another factor, in that it becomes necessary to have a steady wage, or two seasonal wages, in order to form a family when a couple cannot live in the parents' home.

2. Headship of households

An important element in the constitution of families is that of female headships of households. The situation varies in direct relation with the departure of the husband in search of work outside the village or community. These departures tend to be more prolonged than in cases when men are hired for seasonal agricultural jobs rather, we are referring to cases when men are employed as miners, builders, labourers on public works, in manufacturing, etc. In these cases, the wife becomes the de facto head of household, with all the material and emotional responsibilities towards her children that this entails, as well as the implications for her of having an absentee husband.

/There is

There is another type of female headship which occurs in unstable, free or consensual unions or concubinage relationships (Colombia, Paraguay, Brazil, Jamaica and Central America in general). Sometimes various unions occur in succession, leaving several children who are the sole responsibility of the woman, In these cases, the woman generally becomes proletarianized, carrying out a variety of activities during the year. Also, she has a larger number of children.

3. The decline in fertility

The facts noted above (loss of land, difficulty of finding work, jobs that imply emigration) on the one hand and, on the other the deferment of unions, the non-formation of couples or families, and knowledge of methods of contraception have caused a notable decline in fertility indexes in all countries. At the same time, there is in some cases a shortening of the reproductive period to more or less 16.5 years in all. 70/

The decline in fertility at country level can be seen in table 2. The totals show a marked decrease between 1960-1965 and 1975-1980 for the region as a whole and for all the countries, without exception. There are striking differences in fertility rates between the countries of the Southern Cone and the others, whether Andean or Central American countries. In Central America, there is a dramatic decrease in Costa Rica and Cuba; in the Andean countries, there is a significant decline in the rates in Colombia and Venezuela. In the northern Atlantic sector, there is a notable decrease in Brazil and, to a lesser extent in Paraguay.

Large families were customary during periods in history when certain crops (coffee, peanuts, and others) required a great deal of manpower. In settlement areas in Brazil, for example, families with more than five members were rewarded and had all their installation costs paid. At present, when families have little or no land, they tend to be smaller. This has been generally observed in the Bolivian altiplano and the Peruvian sierra.

In the Bolivian altiplano, rural families are smaller than urban families 71/ in areas of longstanding minifundia, sometimes families are not formed or there are one-person families. As in the case of emigration, all these new features of the rural family are the result of internal control or a strategy for contending with poverty.

Data from some research studies illustrate this: in the first place, a study on Brazil showed a very clear difference in the number of children between women of 35 to 40 years of age and those over 40. In the first group, there is a considerable decline in the number of children compared with the second group. Although the former are still at a child-bearing age, the final number of children they will have is not likely to increase. Women between 35 and 40 years have 4.1 children on average, with 3.7 surviving. Women of over 40 years have 9.8 children on average with 7.8 surviving.

/Table 2

Table 2

LATIN AMERICA: GLOBAL FERTILITY RATES EXPRESSED IN NUMBER OF CHILDREN

	1960-1965	1965-1970	1970-1975	1975-1980
Southern Cone countries				
Chile	5.0	4.1	3.3	3.1
Argentina	3.1	3.0	3.0	2.9
Uruguay	2.9	2.9	3.0	2.9
Andean countries				
Peru	6.9	6.6	5.8	5.5
Bolivia	6.6	6.6	6.5	6.4
Ecuador	7.0	6.8	6.5	6.3
Colombia	6.7	6.0	4.8	4.3
Venezuela	6.7	6.0	5.2	4.7
Northern Atlantica				
Brazil	6.2	5.7	5.1	4.5
Paraguay	6.6	6.4	5.7	5.2
Central America and Mexico				
Mexico	6.8	6.7	6.2	5.4
Guatemala	6.9	6.4	6.2	5.7
Honduras	7.4	7.4	7.4	7.1
El Salvador	6.9	6.6	6.3	6.0
Nicaragua	7.3	7.1	6.9	6.6
Costa Rica	7.0	5.8	4.3	3.6
Panama	5.7	5.4	4.8	4.1
Cuba	4.7	4.3	3.5	2.2
Haiti	6.2	6.2	6.1	5.9
Dominican Republic	7.5	7.1	6.2	5.0
Total	6.0	5.6	5.1	4.6

Source: ECLAC, Statistical Yearbook for Latin America, 1981.

In Colombia, in view of the changes in the structure of coffee-growing, excess of population, the closing of the territorial coffee frontier and the proces. of proletarianization, the concept of the large family is being abandoned. The Federation of Coffee-Growers is promoting birth control programmes. 73/ In García Rovira (Colombia), certain data show that the large family is being rejected. The stratum which shows the smallest number of children is that of the poorest families (4.34 children, on average).

/In Brazil

In Brazil the moradoras (rural) have 3.7 children born alive and the volantes have 3.3. They have the last child at around the age of 36 or 37; thus, the reproductive period is reduced to approximately 16.5 years. They continue breast-feeding for a period of up to five years in order not to become pregnant 74/.

In Chile, women of over 40 years of age have on average 7.0 children, while women under 40 have on average 1.8 children. 75/

For some researchers, however, the decline in fertility among agricultural wage-earners is not so clear. Studies conducted in Colombia indicate that the peasantry has a higher fertility rate than the rural proletariat because of the lower average age of wage-earners, their semi-urban residence, their job is instability, and other factors. In Chile, on the other hand, proletarian families with urban residence have a larger number of children than sub-proletarian families with rural residence. At present there is no conclusive evidence as to what the trend will be.

In contrast, a very clear relationship is observable between educational level and number of children: the higher the educational level, the smaller the number of children. There are many examples in various countries that support this statement. Table 3 illustrates the situation in Mexico.

Table 3

MEXICO: AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHILDREN BORN ALIVE TO MARRIED WOMEN AND WOMEN LIVING IN CONSENSUAL UNION ACCORDING TO RURAL OR SEMI-URBAN RESIDENCE AND LEVEL OF SCHOOLING a/

RURAL WITHOUT URBAN INFLUENCE
SECTOR II

Age groups	Illiterate	1st, 2nd, 3rd primary	4th and 5th primary	6th primary	Secondary and over	Total
15-29	3.3	5.4	2.5	2.2	- c/	2.2
	(181)	(239)	(67)	(20)	(5)	(512)
30-49	7.6	7.4	7.6	7.9	- c/	7.5
	(301)	(254)	(49)	(10)	(5)	(619)
TOTAL	6.0	5.5	4.7	4.1	3.5	5.6
	(482)	(493)	(116)	(30)	(10)	(1 131)
Standardized Total b/	5.6	5.6	5.3	5.3	2.5	5.5

/RURAL WITH

RURAL WITH URBAN INFLUENCE
SECTOR I

Age groups	Illiterate	1st, 2nd, 3rd primary	4th and 5th primary	6th primary	Secondary and over	Total
15-29	2.0 (25)	3.2 (59)	3.1 (21)	1.4 (15)	- c/ (7)	2.6 (127)
30-49	8.1 (63)	6.7 (60)	7.5 (16)	- c/ (3)	- c/ (3)	7.4 (145)
TOTAL	6.4 (88)	5.0 (119)	5.0 (37)	2.4 (18)	1.6 (10)	5.2 (272)
Standardized Total b/	5.3	5.1	5.5	4.6	2.2	5.2

SEMI-URBAN
SECTOR III

Age groups	Illiterate	1st,2nd, 3rd primary	4th and 5th primary	6th primary	Secondary and over	Total	Tot
15-29	3.0 (68)	2.7 (95)	2.8 (44)	1.9 (42)	1.6 (26)	2.6 (276)	2.' (915
30-49	7.1 (115)	7.0 (108)	6.7 (53)	5.2 (29)	4.3 (21)	6.8 (326)	7.: (1090
Total	5.6 (183)	5.0 (203)	4.9 (97)	3.2 (71)	2.8 (47)	4.9 (602)	5.3 (2005
Standardized Total b/	5.2	5.0	4.9	3.7	3.1	4.9	

Source: Catalina Gaugain: "Influencia de la escolaridad sobre la fecundidad en los medios rural y semiurbano de México": La Fecundidad rural en México, El Colegio de México, Mexico City, 1983.

a/ Excluding NO RESPONSE

b/ Standardization makes it possible to eliminate the different age structures that may exist between sectors, thus allowing for comparison between them.

c/ Fewer than 10 cases

D. WOMEN'S DEMANDS AND ORGANIZATIONS: SOME REFLECTIONS

Despite the fact that in almost all the official documents, reference is made to the need for women to participate in the discussion of local, regional and national affairs; to the need for them to make proposals and state their demands, and to the urgency for this to be channelled through their own organizations, very little progress has been made and there is very little information on the subject.

/Several points

Several points should be emphasized in this connection. In the first place, it bears repeating that women are great organizers of their time, as is evidenced by the way they perform their expanded household chores and their independent activities. In the second place, women do not express themselves verbally, but their opinion is important and is expressed through their husbands. In the third place, women fulfil a series of social and cultural roles which may not be app appreciated by or known to external agents. And finally, women do take part in organizations, but these organizations are not the ones considered in publications: about rural society.

As regards the first point, it has already been dealt with in other sections of this paper. Regarding the second, the conclusions of the seminar on Andean Research and of various studies show that women are responsible for important decisions, the more so the poorer the stratum to which they belong. The aforesaid seminar concludes that the idea that women are marginated from decision making both within the family and in the community is a myth. 76/ It is true, however, that women do not know how to express themselves and are often unable to conceptualize their feelings. It is true that women are inarticulate and therefore cannot express their demands. This is the result of cultural patterns; i.e., the idea that the one who speaks in public is the man. Moreover, women do not feel prepared; they feel they are uneducated and are ashamed of their lack of preparation for public participation. They also feel "stultified" by child-bearing. In experiments in Chile with personal development workshops, women have asked to be taught how to speak. Thus, it is clear that women must be trained-through workshops, women's groups, special meetings. or other methods - to formulate their aspirations and demands.

Regarding the third point, that of the important social and cultural roles performed by rural women, FAO has drawn attention to the large number of activities that are carried out by women to maintain and further the communication, fellowship and sympathy that make social life possible. In peasant communities, this duty falls almost exclusively on the women and ranges from organizing ceremonies (baptism, weddings, etc.) to promoting co-operation and good will among relatives or families in the neighbourhood, to organising services, reciprocal exchanges of work and barter arrangements. Not only does the amount of time that women devote to these activities go unrecognized, but there is also a failure to take it into account in calculating how much time is assigned to various tasks. The extent to which women must perform such activities can affect the time available for other productive tasks. If they fail to carry out these activities as a result of their increased participation in either unpaid or paid agricultural work, there will be a deterioration in the relations of solidarity and in general of social fellowship in the community. 77/

Respecting the fourth point, i.e., membership in organizations, it must be said that women also take part in a great number of activities, which are sometimes very different from those of the men. In general, women are excluded from the traditionally male-dominated production organizations, such as associations concerned with irrigation, use of the mountain slopes, or use of common pastures, or producer co-operatives. They have also been excluded from agrarian reform organizations and processes; they have not been regarded as members, nor have they been included into them. This is in line with the stereotype: women are to be excluded from matters concerning production.

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Nevertheless, they are active participants in everything that concerns the direct well-being of their family, i.e., in everything she considers useful and necessary. And that is where they can be found; on all the committees responsible for obtaining services such as potable water, electric lighting, polyclinics, mini-markets, schools, roads, improvement in transport, etc. They participate actively and in their own way: arranging raffles, preparing meals and sweets to sell at soccer matches, organizing dances, etc. 78/They are also well-disciplined and co-operative participants in parent-teacher associations, although even there they do not express their views.

Women also play an important part in religious festivities through the cofradías, or dance groups; in the celebration of the day of the patron of the town or community; as madrinas (godmother)etc. This is also true of church activities such as catechism, missions, and others.

The Mothers' Centres in Chile are a special type of organization. These centres were organized by the State 20 years ago, and there are now 350 of them in the central valley region alone, with more than 10 000 members. 79/ Experience has shown that when peasant women organize themselves they do not seek a role in public life at the national level, but rather they seek a space of their own, they want "to go out", to "learn to speak", to combine their daily routine with a handicraft which, as far as possible, will produce earnings.

A large number of projects for women are supported by the Catholic Church and by foreign organizations. They are of two types, i.e. production-oriented and training-oriented,and almost all favour the formation of small groups of around 15 peosons. There is some information on projects for setting up discussion and training groups, housewives' clubs, health centres and monitor training centres, small production projects, and others. The data are fragmentary, however, and there are no evaluation studies on them, except for some preliminary research done in Chile.80/

In the rural areas, the participation of women in various types of organizatic is often hampered by the fact that women have very little leisure time and very few opportunities for recreation. In addition to the many tasks and responsibilities mentioned in other sections of this paper, certain cultural factors also have something to do with this, e.g., the fact that women are viewed as "housewives" and "homebodies", that neither they nor others recognize a woman's right to rest and recreation, and the fact that it has never occurred to them they might actually be able to have their own space to share with other women in clubs, social groups, centres, and so forth.

These points partly explain why women are reluctant to take part in meetings or activities which are not fully justified in their own and others' eyes, especially those of their husbands. The feeling is that a woman must not waste time, must always be busy and must not be seen in the street, in order to fit the image of herself that she thinks she should fit.

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On the other hand, the image of male peasants -and here there are marked contrasts with respect to women- is that of the "public" man. Men belong in the street. It is they who establish bonds with the outside world. During the week, they have the street, the corner where they meet and chat with friends, as well as community groups such as the irrigation board, co-operative, union and shops. On Sundays and holidays, they congregate at soccer games, bars and bazaars.

Kate Young observed a similar situation in Mexico. There is another area in which the rights of men and women are markedly different: men can and do, spend the product of their work (and that of their wives) on a series of activities of personal consumption such as smoking, drinking, or supporting two families. Indeed, on any feast day or market day, the men will be found drinking in the bars with their male relatives and friends, while their wives are busy in the market or in household activities.

Consequently, if women are to increase their participation, the traditional images will have to change. Women should have free time, should be able to leave the house -as they do now in order to shop- should have their own space, should be able to gather in public with other women to talk about themselves or the community, and should be able to express their needs; in order for this to come about, they must be trained and must organize themselves. Progress must be made in this direction if women are to become participants in society and in the economy. Women themselves are aware of these needs. This is evident in the continued existence of the Mothers' Centres and in women's requests to speak out, to have access to more education and to have social centres. 81/

E. RECOMMENDATIONS AND POLICIES

It is worthwhile to stress and endorse the considerations on this subject that were set forth at the Round Table on Survival Strategies in Peasant economies: the Role of Women. At this round table, reference was made to rural development programmes which usually separate production-oriented programmes designed for men, from socially-oriented programmes, designed for women. This approach perpetuates a distinction between fields of activity which in practice are not and should not be separated. Reference was also made to the lack of critical thinking about the cultural patterns underlying the existing division of labour; the disregard for the role of women in the survival strategies of peasant economies, the view that reproduction is an individual problem in which public policies have no part, and others. Other recommendations of the round table were aimed at achieving explicit recognition of women as subjects of rural development, the need to recognize women as agents of production and not only of reproduction, the promotion of a woman's work in production in such a way that she is able to keep anything left over from her work and improve her position within the domestic unit, and the need to take into account whether social processes and other programmes perpetuate or change the traditional role of women.

For the purposes of this paper, we would add to the above the following remarks:

/1. Two areas

1. Two areas of concern in regard to rural women clearly stand out in the recommendations contained in official documents. One focuses on women as agricultural -and, particularly, food- producers, while the other relates to the overall development of women and their retention in rural areas. The situation is complicated by the fact that peasant women fulfil two different roles: that of housewife and that of farmer. Peasant women in the process of proletarianization also play a dual role: that of housewife and that of agricultural wage-earner. The issue then becomes how to implement policies which will reconcile both concerns and both roles without adding further to the burden of responsibilities and work already borne by women.

2. As regards policies, there has been a de facto division between the public and private spheres Because women are considered as belonging in the "private" spheres are generally excluded from policy matters, which are considered as belonging to the"public"sphere. This means that there are no studies on relationships within the family: the relationships between the spouses, socialization subordination, the real existence of a patriarchy and how it is manifested in terms of relationships with the outside world, and so forth. However, this erroneous conception of what is "public" and what is "private", is to say the least, a very ambiguous one. There is nothing more private than conception and yet it has been the target of public policies for over 20 years. "Private" matters are considered to relate to another area of women's activities, needs or rights that are not taken into account in the measurement of production and economic aspects. This leads to a distortion in reporting on many aspects of the status of women.

3. It has become clear that peasant women's situations are extremely changeable contrary to what had previously been thought. They are constantly involved in two simultaneous processes: peasant stratification, and the family cycle. An additional factor in this regard is the type of agricultural economy in which they live. We mention this in order to point out the dynamism and complexity of the situations which must be taken into account in policy-making.

4. Another highly advisable course of action is to ask the following question in regard to each situation, case and country: what distinguishes a poor rural woman from a man or child living in the same circumstances? This will make it possible to prevent policies from unnecessarily excluding other members of the family group.

5. In view of the economic crisis affecting the region and the increase in rural poverty, solutions should be sought at the local level, where the organization of women themselves should play a leading role both in the articulation of their demands and in the search for solutions based on their own resources. It is important that the technical and financial aid supplied should support the mass of accumulated knowledge that peasant women possess (household organization, cultivation techniques, popular medicine, handicrafts, etc.) and strengthen their self-image in a different model of rural development, in which the contribution they really make to their own development is taken into account.

6. With regard to the matter of compatibility between the different tasks a rural woman performs and the need to lighten her current and future workload, a set of simple technologies or simple solutions should be sought that would help

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lighten the tasks that require excessive energy and time and improve the family's living conditions,e.g. fetching water, fetching firewood, making bread, washing clothes. One might suggest the making of simple household elements, the use of clean and cheap forms of energy (e.g. increasing the use of solar energy to provide hot water) providing sanitary services. etc.

Further, a set of alternative technologies should be sought which would increase and enrich the variety of food products: e.g., the recovery of lost or forgotten vegetable species of high nutritive value, such as quinoa; the introduction of organic vegetable gardens; and techniques for preserving produce from recent crops.

7. There are few studies dealing with the effect of the communications media on rural women, despite the fact it is known that they generally transmit messages that are irrelevant to their situation and thus do not contribute towards raising their consciousness or towards bringing about a positive change in their situation. An interesting contribution by women's organizations would be to foster horizontal communication media, that is, to develop alternative means of communication that would enhance the value of their own culture and resources and increase their own potential as an agent of change.

8. An important issue that must be dealt with in future policies is that of the proletarianization of rural women. The research done to date has dealt sufficientl with the status of women in peasant economies, but not enough attention has been giver to the question of rural proletarianization. Women in forest villages, for example,are proletarianized but have no work, agricultural or otherwise, and it is not known what their position is with respect to the urban market. All the studies made to date have been polarized between women of the rural areas, with all the differences that are found there, and women of the urban area. However, the situation of women in the process of becoming proletarianized, who are not yet inserted into the towns, who live on the outskirts or who are established in the villages,"rural communities" or unstable settlements, has not yet been considered in any study.

9. Thus far, the studies carried out have not made specific policy recommendatio or have only done so in regard to specific situations and problems. Moreover, official and non-governmental agencies accept the diagnoses supplied by technical staff and research findings which, although very important, usually represent outside views. This fact shows up the need to supplement this knowledge with information supplied by rural women themselves.

This increases the need to support different types of research designed to complement the traditional methods. From this standpoint, it is important to collect and analyse the experiments done along the lines of participative research and popular education, as a way of going beyond learning about the situation of rural women, that is, to know the situation in order to change it. In this regard, it would be very useful to compile and systematize the numerous experiments that are being carried out by various groups in Latin America, which include techniques such as group discussions, case studies, personal testimony, dramatizations, and others. The challenge now is to use these new methodologies as research techniques. Arriagada points out that the chief shortcomings of these methodologies can be

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summarized as follows: the difficulties of establishing criteria of truth, the difficulty of establishing the preconcieved views of the researcher and the problem of making statements of a general nature.

10. The different types of rural women and the changes they are experiencing should be ranked and classified, from the most general to the most specific cases, in such a way as to present an objective view of Latin American rural women. This classification should function as a matrix of data, divided into subregions, which should include the main results of researches, documents and theory on women produced in the region. A study of the different situations of women will make it possible to understand them better, to design policies with a sounder basis in fact and help women learn more about themselves.

Something similar has been proposed with regard to the compilation and organization of information on women, in what has been termed "a basic information model". 83/

11. It would be advisable to make an assessment of the numerous action projects generally financed by non-governmental agencies. A great number of these are devoted to women, but there has been no appraisal of their impact on women and their environment, of the integration of family and locality,of the posiibility of extendin them to other places, of their potential for self-support, and other equally important factors.

/Notes

Notes

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2/ Ibid., World Plan of Action...., para. 9

3/ "To formulate and execute government planning policies that provide for the effective integration of women in rural development, with a view to reducing their migration to urban areas which only worsens the problem of 'marginality'", Economic Commission for Latin America, Regional Plan of Action for the Integration of Women into Latin American Economic and Social Development, 1977, para. 23, a) 2).

4/ See: Report of the Third Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, Mexico City, 8-10 August 1983 (document E/CEPAL/G.1265, 5 December 1983).

5/ ECLA/FAO Expert Consultation on Styles of Development and Agricultural Policies, Santiago, Chile, preliminary version, unnumbered document, November 1983.

6/ The additional countries are Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and Peru.

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/20/F.H. Cardoso

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